An Empirical Analysis of Employment Factors Among Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

A significant number of displaced individuals have migrated to Malaysia as a result of ongoing conflicts in Myanmar, Pakistan, Yemen, and Syria. Despite not being a signatory to either the 1967 Protocol or the 1951 Refugee Convention, Malaysia has consistently faced an influx of Rohingya refugees. This study examines the economic outcomes of Rohingya refugees, focusing on factors influencing their employment in Malaysia. Data were collected from Rohingya refugees, the largest refugee group in Malaysia, through a quantitative survey involving 200 respondents in the Klang Valley. Binary logistic regression analysis revealed that Rohingya refugees with strong ties to the Malaysian community are more likely to secure employment, aided by networks within the Rohingya community for sharing coping mechanisms. The study recommends a dual approach that balances Malaysia's temporary hosting of refugees with long-term solutions, including their return home or resettlement in a third country.

JEL Classification: J61, J21, J15, I38, O15

Keywords: Binary logistic regression; Economic Outcome; Employment Experience; Employment Status; Rohingya refugees

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INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol and therefore carries no legal obligation to refugees. Nonetheless, under customary international law, the country remains bound by the principle of non-refoulement, which prevents the return of individuals to places where their safety may be threatened (UNHCR, 2011). Despite the absence of formal commitments, Malaysia has long hosted large numbers of refugees, a situation that has created persistent social and economic pressures (Fajth et al., 2019). Without a clear policy framework, refugee management is marked by uncertainty, with limited clarity regarding their numbers, identities, and locations (Daniel and Jeffrey, 2020).

As of the end of May 2025, there were 200,260 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia, reflecting a continued increase compared to previous years (UNHCR, 2025). However, the total number of refugees in the country is widely believed to be higher than the official registrations, as many remain unregistered. Estimates from policy and regional reports suggest that Malaysia may host between 150,000 and 400,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in total (UN ESCAP, 2021). Although earlier estimates fall below current UNHCR registrations, they highlight long-standing uncertainty and the likelihood of substantial undercounting in earlier years.

This population is predominantly male, with women and minors comprising smaller proportions. Table 1 shows that the majority of refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR in Malaysia are from the Rohingya ethnic group in Myanmar. Others originate from more than 50 countries, fleeing conflict and persecution (UNHCR, 2025).

Table 1 Refugees and Asylum-Seekers Registered with UNHCR in Malaysia

Origin/ Ethnic	Total
Myanmar	179,020
Rohingyas	117,670
Chins	29,620
Others	31,730
Other Countries	21,230
Pakistanis	5,650
Yemenis	3,050
Somalis	2,780
Syrians	2,520
Afghans	2,770
Sri Lankans	1,030
Palestinians	500
Iraqis and other countries	440

Sources: UNHCR (2025)

Globally, resettlement remains extremely limited, with UNHCR (2019) noting that fewer than one per cent of the nearly 20 million refugees under its mandate eventually gain access to resettlement. Many refugees remain in Malaysia for extended periods, with some residing for over two decades (Wake and Cheung, 2016; Ghazali et al., 2020). From January to December 2023, the UNHCR submitted 155,486 refugees for resettlement, including 11,578 from Malaysia, with 24,401 departures (UNHCR, 2023). Yet, opportunities remain limited, leaving most to endure uncertain and lengthy stays.

Under Malaysia's current policy framework, refugees are denied legal access to employment, education, and healthcare. Many turn to the informal economy, taking on low-paid, precarious work in sectors such as construction, cleaning, or small-scale self-employment (Wake and Cheung, 2016; Todd et al., 2019). Although UNHCR cards help some in finding works, exploitation and lack of legal protection remain widespread. Due to this, recent proposals from the Human Resources Ministry suggest allowing refugees access to "3D jobs" (dirty, dangerous, and difficult), offering at least a temporary relief (Malay Mail, 2023; The Star, 2018).

Therefore, in this context, understanding the factors shaping employment opportunities for refugees, particularly the Rohingya, is essential. This study examines the economic outcomes of Rohingya refugees, focusing on factors influencing their employment in Malaysia. Employment is closely linked to basic self-reliance and day-to-day security, especially in situations where formal rights and protections are limited. The objective of this study is to examine how demographic, human capital, social, and institutional factors are

associated with the employment status of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. Such knowledge could help in designing strategies that ease the vulnerability in Malaysia and support longer-term solutions through return or resettlement of the refugees.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study applies the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) together with Human Capital and Social Capital theories to examine the factors influencing the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. The combination of these frameworks provides a broad foundation for understanding how different forms of resources and constraints shape the livelihood outcomes. The SLF highlights the interaction between assets, opportunities, and external limitations, while Human Capital theory emphasises the role of education, skills, and experience in determining employability. Social Capital theory, on the other hand, adds attention to networks and relationships that may facilitate access to work, particularly in environments where formal rights are limited. By using these frameworks, they help in organising the analysis around demographic, human capital, social, and institutional factors that may affect employment outcomes. Although evidence from refugee research is mixed and highly context-specific, these perspectives offer a useful starting point for examining how Rohingya refugees navigate the Malaysia's informal labour market.

Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF)

Levine (2014) revised the SLF to focus on three central questions what people do for a living, what shapes their choices, and the outcomes that follow. The framework highlights the role of aspirations, constraints, and motivations, recognising that livelihood strategies are influenced by abilities, risk attitudes, and broader institutions. It also incorporates identity dimensions such as age, gender, and education that may influence livelihoods. Figure 1 illustrates how these components interact by showing that identity, context and trends, institutions and policies, and assets and vulnerabilities shape people's perceptions of risks and livelihood possibilities. These perceptions then guide the livelihood strategies they adopt, the activities they undertake, and the outcomes they ultimately experience. This conceptual structure provides a basis for analysing how individual characteristics and external conditions shape livelihood decisions in diverse settings.
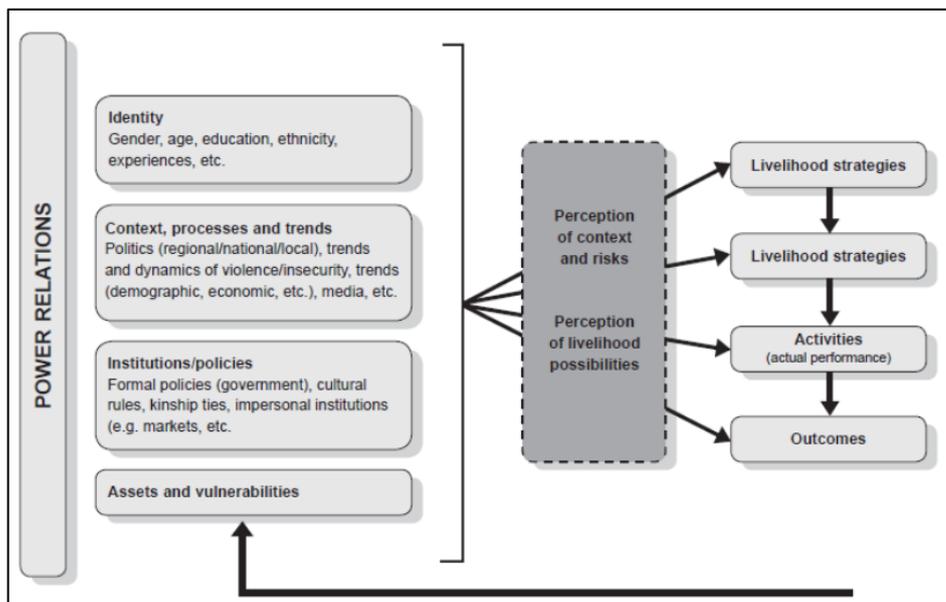
Source: Levine (2014)

Figure 1 An Operational Map for Research Using the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

This study applies the SLF to examine refugee employment in Malaysia, while acknowledging that legal restrictions and discrimination are not fully addressed within the framework. With regard to demographic factors, existing research remains inconsistent. For instance, age has been linked to higher employment among prime-age workers (Richardson et al., 2004; Piché et al., 1997), though some studies indicate that it has no impact (Khawaja et al., 2019). Similarly, findings on marital status have been reported as either irrelevant (Hebbani and Preece, 2015) or a disadvantage for married women (Arafah, 2016). Furthermore, the impact on the duration of stay appears to differ across contexts (Correa-Velez et al., 2015; Hugo, 2011). Based on this literature, the study examines the association between age, marital status, and length of stay with refugee employment in the Malaysian context. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed in this study:

> H1: There is a statistically significant relationship between age and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
> H2: There is a statistically significant relationship between marital status and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
> H3: There is a statistically significant relationship between the length of stay in Malaysia and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

Despite the extensive application of the SLF in refugee research, a few studies have investigated its relevance in contexts where refugees possess no legal labour rights. Consequently, there is limited understanding of how identity-related factors influence employment outcomes within Malaysia's informal labour market.

Human Capital

Human capital theory links education, skills, and experience to employability (Becker, 1964; OECD, 2001). Accordingly, several studies identify education as a significant predictor of employment (Hebbani et al., 2016; De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010). However, other research notes that qualifications and previous work experience do not always transfer across labour markets (Hugo, 2011; Lamba, 2003). This study, therefore, examines whether education and prior work experience are related with employment among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia (H4-H5).

> H4: There is a statistically significant relationship between the education level and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
> H5: There is a statistically significant relationship between work experience and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

Language proficiency is often highlighted as an important factor for labour market access (Beiser and Hou, 2000). This could be seen where proficiency in English has been linked to improved opportunities (Evans and Fitzgerald, 2017; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007). Given the Malaysian context, this study examines proficiency in both Malay and English languages (H6-H9), as these languages are relevant in Malaysia. Furthermore, training may also improve employability, although its effectiveness often vary depending on its relevance to labour market demand (Sesnan et al., 2004). Therefore, this study also evaluates the potential role of training (H10) among the Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

> H6: There is a statistically significant relationship between Malay language proficiency (speaking) and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
> H7: There is a statistically significant relationship between Malay language proficiency (reading) and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
> H8: There is a statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency (speaking) and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.
> H9: There is a statistically significant relationship between English language proficiency (reading) and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

> *H10: There is a statistically significant relationship between training and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*

While much of the existing evidence on human capital and refugee employment comes from high-income countries, there is a lack of knowledge about the role of education, work experience, and language proficiency in Malaysia, where refugees encounter legal and structural barriers to work.

Social Capital

Social capital refers to resources embedded within networks of relationships (Coleman, 1990; Lin, 1999). In the context of refugee employment, it is observed that connections with host-country nationals could improve access to employment (De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010). Putnam (2000) further distinguishes between bridging ties across groups from bonding ties within close communities, both of which may influence outcomes differently (Gittell and Vidal, 1998; Claridge, 2018). However, the evidence remains mixed, where some studies indicate limited effects (Zhao, 2002), while others demonstrate that networks may help secure better-quality employment (Lamba, 2003). Based on the observations, this study investigates the roles of Malaysian friends (H11), bridging ties between the Rohingya and Malaysian communities (H12-H13), and bonding ties with the Malaysian community (H14).

> *H11: There is a statistically significant relationship between having Malaysian friends and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*
> *H12: There is a statistically significant relationship between bridging social capital with the Rohingya community and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*
> *H13: There is a statistically significant relationship between bridging social capital with the Malaysian community and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*
> *H14: There is a statistically significant relationship between bonding social capital with the Malaysian community and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*

The relationship between social capital and refugee employment has been studied in countries with formal integration policies, however, its significance in Malaysia, where refugees predominantly depend on informal networks, remains largely unexplored.

Institutional Support

Institutional support may influence employment, although its effects vary across settings. For instance, government compacts such as the Jordan Compact demonstrate how formal frameworks could expand opportunities by issuing work permits and relaxing sector restrictions for refugees (Khatib and Cox, 2023; Fakhoury, 2019). However, there are mixed outcomes in Jordan, where many refugees returned to informal work due to low wages and poor conditions (Gordon, 2021), hence highlighting that implementation and work quality often matter more than legislation itself, as noted in the Global Refugee Work Rights Report (Ginn et al., 2022). Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) may also support refugee employment by providing vocational training, job-matching services, skills development, and employer engagement programmes that help bridge the gap between refugees and potential labour market opportunities (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2022). Such support becomes particularly important in restrictive contexts where formal work rights are limited or absent. In Malaysia, where refugees are denied legal access to formal employment, the influence of government practices and NGO initiatives remains uncertain. Therefore, this study examines whether government and NGO support are associated with employment outcomes (H15–H16).

> *H15: There is a statistically significant relationship between government support and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*
> *H16: There is a statistically significant relationship between NGO support and the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.*

Despite global evidence that government and NGOs interventions could play an important role on refugee employment, there is still little empirical research on how such support affects refugee employment in Malaysia.

Literature Gaps

The reviewed literature identifies three main areas where knowledge is limited. Firstly, demographic factors, including age, marital status, and length of stay have not been sufficiently studied within Malaysia's informal labour market. Secondly, the employment value of education, work experience, language proficiency, and training remains ambiguous in this context. Finally, there is limited evidence on the influence of social networks and institutional support on refugee employment in contexts where formal work rights are absent. Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by examining associations between demographic, human capital, social, and institutional factors, as well as employment outcomes among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. The analysis is exploratory and does not presuppose causality.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Data Source and Variables

This study utilised primary data collected through a structured questionnaire, which was administered following approval from the relevant ethics committee. The survey gathered information on demographics, migration details, employment experiences, social networks, and institutional support among Rohingya refugees, who represented the largest refugee group in Malaysia. The dependent variable was employment status, coded as employed (1) or unemployed (0). The independent variables were grouped into four categories that were demographic, human capital, social, and institutional factors.

Sampling

Due to the undocumented status of Rohingya refugees and their exclusion from official statistics, a non-probability sampling strategy was employed. Convenience sampling was initially used to access available participants, while purposive sampling was applied to target individuals who fulfilled the specific study criteria (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Respondents were recruited in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, where large Rohingya communities were concentrated, with assistance from community contacts.

Respondents

The study population consisted of working-age Rohingya refugees (18 to 50 years) who had resided in Malaysia for a minimum of one year and had prior employment experience. Pre-assessments were conducted to ensure that respondents met these criteria before participation. In total, 200 surveys were completed. Although the final sample size was smaller than the initial target, it was considered adequate, following Roscoe's (1975) rule of thumb for regression analysis.

Data Collection

Surveys were administered with the assistance of eight Rohingya enumerators who were proficient in English, Malay, and Rohingya. The enumerators supported respondents with limited literacy and ensured that the questionnaires were fully completed. Each session lasted about 40 to 50 minutes, and a small token of appreciation was provided. All responses were kept confidential and analysed solely for academic purposes.

Empirical Strategy

The logistic regression technique was employed to address the objectives of this study. The dependent variable in this research was the employment status of the Rohingya refugees, categorised as either employed (1) or unemployed (0). When applying logistic regression, several specific assumptions must be verified and properly addressed. Unlike linear regression, which requires a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables, this assumption is often violated when the dependent variable is categorical. However,

logistic regression resolves this limitation by transforming the multiple linear regression equation into logarithmic terms, thereby accommodating the non-linear relationships.

This study was motivated by the analysis conducted by De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010) on the economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands. They utilised human and social capital theories to explore various factors affecting refugees' employment and occupational status. Similarly, the present study examined a range of variables to understand the employment prospects of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

For demographic variables, the analysis included age (represented by two dummy variables), marital status, and length of stay in Malaysia. These factors were crucial in assessing how demographic characteristics influence the employment outcomes. For the human capital variables, these encompassed education level (represented by three dummy variables), years of work experience, proficiency in Malay (both reading and speaking), proficiency in English (both reading and speaking), and refugees' participation in training programmes in Malaysia. These variables were essential for evaluating the role of skills and qualifications in job placement.

As for the category of social variables, these included the presence of Malaysian friends, bridging social capital within the Rohingya community, bridging social capital within the Malaysian community, and bonding social capital within the Malaysian community. These variables facilitated the evaluation of the influence of social networks and relationships on employment opportunities. Additionally, the study incorporated support variables, focusing on the assistance provided by organisational bodies, government entities, and NGOs. This included analysing the availability and effectiveness of various support systems in aiding refugees' employment.

While De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010) focused on factors like host country-specific education and social connections, the present research extended their model by incorporating a broader range of variables, including language proficiency and the role of support systems. This comprehensive approach aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the employment prospects of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, building on the foundational work of De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010) while adapting it to the specific context and variables relevant to this research. To evaluate the study objectives, the following logistic regression models were estimated. The three logistic models of this study are presented below:

$$\text{Logit (Employment)} = \beta_0\,\beta_1\,\text{Age1}_i\beta_2\,\text{Age2}_i\beta_3\,MRS_i\beta_4\,LOSIM_i\beta_5 EDU1_i\beta_6\,EDU2_i\beta_7\,EDU3_i\beta_8\,YOWE_i \\ \beta_9\,MLPS_i\beta_{10}\,MLPR_i\beta_{11}\,ELPS_i\beta_{12}\,ELPR_i\beta_{13}\,ATTTR_i \tag{1}$$

$$\text{Logit (Employment)} = \beta_0\,\beta_1\,MF_i\beta_2\,BrSCRC_i\beta_3 BrSCMC_i\beta_4 LBoSCMC_i\beta_5 SPGOV_i\,\beta_6 SPNGO_i \tag{2}$$

$$\text{Logit (Employment)} = \beta_0\,\beta_1\,\text{Age1}_i\beta_2\,\text{Age2}_i\beta_3\,MRS_i\beta_4\,LOSIM_i\beta_5 EDU1_i\beta_6\,EDU2_i\beta_7\,EDU3_i\beta_8\,YOWE_i \\ \beta_9\,MLPS_i\beta_{10}\,MLPR_i\beta_{11}\,ELPS_i\beta_{12}\,ELPR_i\beta_{13}\,ATTTR_i\beta_{14}\,MF_i\beta_{15}\,BrSCRC_i\beta_{16} BrSCMC_i \\ \beta_{17} LBoSCMC_i\beta_{18} SPGOV_i\,\beta_{19} SPNGO_i \tag{3}$$

Based on the above three logistic models, the variables used in the equations are further described in Table 2, as seen below.

Table 2   Variable Names and Data Descriptions

Variable	Description
Employment	Y = 1, Employed; Y = 0, Not Employed
Age 1	18 to 25 years old
Age 2	26 to 35 years old
Age 3	36 years old and above
MRS - Marital Status	0 = Never Married or Currently Single, 1 = Currently married
LOSIM - Length of stay in Malaysia	Years of stay in Malaysia
EDU1 - Highest education 1	No education
EDU2 - Highest education 2	Religious Education
EDU3 - Highest education 3	Primary Education
EDU4 - Highest education 4	Secondary Education and above
YOWE - Years of work experience	Duration of the refugees' employment in Malaysia
MLPR - Malay Language proficiency Read	0 = None or Little, 1 = Fluent
MLPS - Malay Language proficiency Speak	0 = None or Little, 1 = Fluent
ELPR - English Language proficiency Read	0 = None or Little, 1 = Fluent
ELPS - English Language proficiency Speak	0 = None or Little, 1 = Fluent

Table 2 Cont.

Variable	Description
ATTTR - Attended training	The attendance of Rohingya refugees in training programmes in Malaysia
MF - Malaysian friend	The presence of any Malaysian friends among the Rohingya refugees. 0 = No, 1 = Yes
BrSCRC - Bridging social capital (Rohingya Community)	The connections between individuals are dissimilar regarding socioeconomic and other characteristics. (Rohingya Community)
BrSCMC - Bridging social capital (Malaysian Community)	The connections between individuals are dissimilar regarding socioeconomic and other characteristics. (Malaysian Community)
BoSCMC - Bonding social capital (Malaysian Community)	The connections between members of a network who are similar to each other concerning social class, race/ethnicity, or other attributes. (Malaysian Community)
SPGOV - Support by Government	Rohingya refugees receiving any assistance or support from the Malaysian Government. 0 = No, 1 = Yes
SPNGO - Support by NGO	Rohingya refugees receiving any assistance or support from the NGOs. 0 = No, 1 = Yes

RESULTS

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to identify the factors influencing the employment status of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. Three models were tested in this research, and employment was measured as a binary outcome, which was coded as employed or unemployed. In the context of this research, Model 1 assessed the demographic information and human capital characteristics, Model 2 examined the social capital and organisational support, and Model 3 simultaneously incorporated all predictors. The results of all three estimated models are presented in Table 3.

The findings for Model 1 revealed that the Omnibus test of Model Coefficients was significant ($\chi^2(13, N = 200) = 34.286$, $p < .05$), confirming that the model had successfully distinguished between employed and unemployed respondents. This model accounted for between 15.8% (Cox and Snell R²) and 24.2% (Nagelkerke R²) of the variance in employment and correctly classified 79.5% of cases. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test further supported model fit ($\chi^2 = 10.506$, where Sig. represents the p-value = 0.231).

The results of estimating Model 1 further revealed that three variables contributed significantly to the probability of employment, namely no education, primary education, and Malay-speaking proficiency. The Wald test confirmed their significance. Positive coefficients for education (i.e., no education and primary education) indicated a higher likelihood of employment probability compared to those with secondary education or higher. In contrast, Malay-speaking proficiency produced a negative coefficient, suggesting that refugees with stronger Malay fluency were less likely to be employed. The odds ratios further illustrated that refugees with no education were 3.73 times more likely to be employed, while those with primary education were 3.20 times more likely to be employed than the same reference group. For Malay-speaking proficiency, the odds ratio was 0.257, indicating reduced employment probability as proficiency increased.

For Model 2, which included only social capital and organisational support variables, the model was also significant ($\chi^2(6, N = 200) = 37.180$, $p < .001$), explaining between 17.0% (Cox and Snell R²) and 26.0% (Nagelkerke R²) of variance, with a classification accuracy of 77.5% of cases. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test again indicated adequate fit ($\chi^2 = 8.932$, where Sig. represents the p-value = 0.348). Two predictors were significant. Bridging social capital within the Rohingya community had a negative coefficient, showing that increased reliance on intra-community ties decreased the probability of employment. This finding is consistent with Wahba and Zenou (2005), who highlighted that inward-looking networks could limit access to job opportunities when information circulates only within the community. In contrast, bonding social capital with Malaysians had a strong positive effect, suggesting that close links with the host community improved employment chances. This aligns with Furtado and Theodoropoulos (2010), who found that strong ties to natives expand access to wider employment networks and improve labour market outcomes. The odds ratio for bridging ties was 0.503, while bonding ties with Malaysians had an odds ratio of 2.276.

Model 3, which included all predictors, was also significant ($\chi^2(19, N = 200) = 55.039$, $p < .001$). The full model explained between 24.1% (Cox and Snell R²) and 36.9% (Nagelkerke R²) of variance and correctly classified 81.5% of cases. The Hosmer-Lemeshow test again confirmed a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 3.565$, where Sig. represents the p-value = 0.399). Three variables remained significant, which were Malay speaking proficiency, bridging social capital within the Rohingya community, and bonding social capital with Malaysians. Additionally, education lost significance in this model, suggesting that once social networks were considered, their influence overshadowed the role of formal schooling. This supports Lamba (2003), who argued that social capital could play a more decisive role than human capital in shaping employment outcomes

for refugees, particularly in informal labour markets.

When tested against the study's hypotheses, the results revealed several key patterns. Age and marital status were not significant predictors of employment, which was consistent with earlier studies (Khawaja et al., 2019; Koyama, 2017). Thus, H1 and H2 were not supported. Similarly, the length of stay in Malaysia did not influence employment outcomes, and therefore H3 was not supported, echoing mixed findings in the literature (Khawaja et al., 2019; Khawaja and Hebbani, 2018).

Table 3 Results of the Logistic Regression

DV=Employment	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age 1 (18 years to 25 years)	0.078 (0.011)		-0.367 (0.193)
Age 2 (26 years to 35 years)	0.041 (0.005)		0.034 (0.003)
MRS (Marital Status)	-0.354 (0.517)		-0.529 (1.068)
LOSIM (Length of stay in Malaysia)	0.031 (0.149)		-0.032 (0.118)
EDU1 (No education)	1.316 (4.876)**		0.250 (0.127)
EDU2 (Religious Education)	-0.08 (0.020)		-0.975 (2.226)
EDU 3 (Primary Education)	1.163 (4.209)**		0.615 (1.062)
YOWE (Years of work experience)	0.072 (0.770)		0.078 (0.722)
MLPS (Malay Language proficiency Speak)	-1.358 (7.972)***		-0.972 (3.230)*
MLPR (Malay Language proficiency Read)	0.284 (0.274)		0.334 (0.308)
ELPS (English Language proficiency Speak)	0.074 (0.006)		0.106 (0.013)
ELPR (English Language proficiency Read)	0.139 (0.023)		-0.814 (0.724)
ATTTR (Attended training in Malaysia)	-0.616 (2.129)		-0.316 (0.433)
Social Capital			
MF (Malaysian Friend)		-0.075 (0.037)	-0.251 (0.295)
BrSCRC (Bridging social capital (Rohingya Community))		-0.688 (7.332)***	-0.577 (4.515)**
BrSCMC (Bridging social capital (Malaysian Community))		-0.066 (0.062)	-0.106 (0.138)
BoSCMC (Bonding social capital (Malaysian Community))		0.822 (10.669)***	0.821 (8.378)***
Organisational support			
SPGOV (Support by Government)		0.007 (0.000)	-0.095 (0.037)
SPNGO (Support by NGO)		0.435 (0.760)	0.413 (0.547)
(Constant)	-0.413 (0.119)	1.275 (7.090)	2.343 (3.322)
Hosmer-Lemeshow Test	0.231	0.348	0.652
Omnibus-Test	0.001	0.000	0.000
Cox & Snell R Square	0.158	0.170	0.241
Nagelkerke R Square	0.242	0.260	0.369
Sample Size	200	200	200

Note: # Control group for age is those above 35 years old; the control group for highest educational attainment is secondary education and above; * significant at 10 per cent, ** significant at 5 per cent, *** significant at 1 per cent.

Education was significant only in Model 1, but its effect disappeared once social capital was introduced, leaving H4 unsupported despite existing evidence suggesting that education improves competitiveness in the labour market (Card, 1999; Lin, 2001). Work experience was consistently non-significant, thus rejecting H5. This result highlights the limited value of prior experience in contexts marked by legal and structural barriers (Bloch, 2007; De Vroome and Van Tubergen, 2010).

Language proficiency produced mixed results. Malay-speaking proficiency was significant but negatively related to employment, partially supporting H6. However, hypotheses H7 (Malay reading) and H8-H9 (English proficiency) were not supported. These findings resonated with studies showing that language skills do not always mitigate discrimination (Hainmueller and Hangartner, 2013). Training participation also showed no significant association, leaving H10 unsupported. Although studies in other contexts (Ahmed, 2019) demonstrate positive outcomes from training, the mismatch between training and labour market demand in Malaysia likely explains the lack of impact (Nawyn, 2010).

In terms of social capital, H11 (having Malaysian friends) was not supported. H12 (bridging ties within the Rohingya community) was supported, but in the opposite direction, as stronger intra-community connections reduced the employment likelihood. H13 (bridging ties with Malaysians) was not supported, while H14 (bonding ties with Malaysians) was supported, reinforcing the importance of trust-based ties with the host society (Cheung and Phillimore, 2017; Lancee, 2012).

Finally, organisational support variables were not significant. This could be seen where neither government assistance nor NGO support significantly predicted employment status, leaving H15 and H16 unsupported. This outcome reflects the reality that institutional support in Malaysia remains primarily humanitarian, focusing on survival needs rather than employment facilitation (Wake and Cheung, 2016; Dryden-Peterson, 2006).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

A large share of studies on refugee employment focuses on states that have ratified the Convention on the Status of Refugees. However, it is essential to compare resettlement processes between ratifying and non-ratifying countries, considering their differences in policy, culture, economy, and politics. This study examined the employment of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, with the aim of identifying the factors influencing their temporary work patterns. The findings are expected to assist stakeholders in developing a framework aligned with the refugees' aspirations.

Employing logistic regression, the study assessed the factors influencing employment probability among Rohingya refugees in Malaysia. The results revealed a significant association between the Malay language proficiency of Rohingya refugees and their employment status. Despite the importance of Malay proficiency for employability, it exhibited a negative correlation with employment. This suggests that refugees may encounter difficulties in finding employment opportunities commensurate with their linguistic abilities. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that this adverse impact was statistically significant only at the 10 per cent level.

The analysis found that the bridging social capital among the Rohingya community in Malaysia demonstrated a significant adverse correlation with the employment status of Rohingya refugees. Although bridging social capital typically facilitates access to diverse resources and opportunities, the Rohingya community may encounter constraints in accessing employment-related support beyond their immediate network. This dearth of external resources could impede the employment prospects of Rohingya refugees, despite their considerable level of bridging social capital within their community.

Conversely, the findings indicate a significant positive relationship between the bonding social capital of Rohingya refugees within the Malaysian community and their employment status. This underscores the potential influence of strong interpersonal ties on their job prospects. Rohingya individuals with familial bonds, particularly through marriage to Malaysians, demonstrate an increased likelihood of securing employment, benefitting from job-related information shared within their Malaysian familial networks. Taken together, these findings illustrate the complex role of language proficiency and social capital in shaping the employment outcomes of Rohingya refugees in Malaysia.

Implications

The findings of this study highlight the need to balance Malaysia's stance of hosting refugees only temporarily with the humanitarian imperative of ensuring their livelihoods while awaiting durable solutions. In the short term, measures should focus on improving refugees' employability. NGOs could provide Malay language classes to enhance access to work, while engagement with employers' engagement initiatives could align refugees' skills with labor market demands. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on legal frameworks that allow refugees to work under clear and regulated guidelines.

In the long term, stronger cooperation with the UNHCR is needed to expand annual resettlement quotas and streamline processes. Accelerating resettlement would reduce protracted displacement while remaining consistent with Malaysia's commitment to temporary protection. Overall, these implications suggest that livelihood support and resettlement efforts are not contradictory to Malaysia's principles but could be operated as complementary strategies to safeguard both national interests and refugee welfare.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Study

In discussing future research directions, it is essential to acknowledge the study's inherent limitations. One such limitation pertains to the predominantly male composition of the respondent pool, potentially biasing the findings away from the perspectives of Rohingya women. Besides, the study's exclusive focus on Rohingya

refugees in the Klang Valley restricts the generalizability of its conclusions to other regions within Malaysia, where socio-economic dynamics may vary. Thus, subsequent research endeavors should encompass Rohingya communities across different states of Malaysia to capture this diversity comprehensively. While the study adopted quantitative methodologies to explore the determinants of employment among Rohingya refugees, integrating semi-structured qualitative interviews could provide richer and more nuanced insights into their experiences. Such qualitative methodologies could enrich understanding by highlighting contextual factors that are often overlooked in quantitative analyses.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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